

Imagine opening your morning newspaper while sipping on your morning coffee. You half-expect to be greeted with news of conflicts: terrorist bombings, gun violence, epidemic, poverty, and other plagues. But, instead of the usual printed black-and-white images, your eyes see colors. Multiple threads sprout from the photos and cover the bleak images in vibrant colors. Some threads spill out of the frame, onto the rest of the page. Your fingers graze these threads lightly. All of a sudden, the bad news lose some of their dark aura. You wonder to yourself if this is what “the silver lining around the cloud” might feel like.

That’s how Questal Tay introduces global conflicts to her audience. Sewing over news articles is her physical and philosophical way of removing the significance of everyday events reported in the news. To her, newspapers often carry negative news, represented by the lackluster black and white colors of the images. By donning these images with colorful threads and make them look more vibrant, Questal found that she was able to re-present the news to be experienced in a more aggressive but aesthetically pleasing way. Through this process of ‘coloring’ bad news, she confronted her anxieties that were induced by such news.

Materials have always been a crucial part of Questal’s dialogue with her artworks. She is intrigued by how materials ‘become’ when they are put together – what kind of emotions can certain materials elicit when combined together, or what experience can materials enhance or subdue in the viewers? *“When you work intuitively with your hands, it really allows the material to guide and new methods develop in the process. At the same time, in developing my works, I work with a consciousness to include viewers, allowing them to enjoy the visuals without any pressure of having to possess artistic knowledge [...] The work represents my attempts at fixing the world’s issues through every stitch, and in that process, I found that I was also able to confront my anxieties.”* shared the artist. Thus, altering the visual presentation of ‘bad news’ images by sewing over them with colorful threads is Questal’s way of experimenting with these materials.

After all, our emotions are directly tied to our senses. By rendering negative images in vivid colors, Questal’s work poses significant questions about the connections between emotions and media news. How do we deal with negative emotions that are induced by daily news? How does our mind distort information when facing negative news? Do we tend to look at things through a colored lens to make ourselves feel better and to preserve our integrity? Questal’s works question the psychological methods that we use to cope with anxiety, and how we process world news on a daily basis.